

birdwatcher spoke to me about a drawing given to him by Dr. Bakul Trivedi who made it during a WWF-I outing to the Jessor Hills just south of Mt. Abu. The prominent white eyebrow, blue upperparts and white underparts with a prominent greyish band broken by white on the chest were shown.

Lalsinhbhai and Dr. Trivedi went out birding to Himmatnagar on 5th February and in a grove of trees edging the river at Shareneswar temple, Dr. Trivedi pointed out his puzzle bird. Lalsinhbhai has seen the Whitebrowed Blue Flycatcher in the Himalaya. Lalsinhbhai mentions Redbreasted Flycatchers also being around. The two species are

the same size, have very similar calls and demonstrate common mannerisms, and though the males are distinctive, the females resemble each other. These facts suggest why the Blue may have been given a go by.

Shareneswar is between the towns of Idar and Vijaynagar in Sabar Kantha (Himmatnagar) District northeast of Ahmedabad.

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### 13. NOTES ON GREEN MUNIA

Seven species of munia are found in the Indian subcontinent (Ali & Ripley 1987). Of these, the Green munia (*Estrilda formosa*) is listed as threatened in India (Collar, Crossby and Stattersfield 1994).

The green munia is an endemic species, very locally and unevenly distributed. It is found mainly in central India from Mt. Abu, Gwalior, Jhansi and Surguja south to Mahabaleshwar, district Adilabad and upto the Vishakhapatnam Ghats. It is also recorded from Lucknow and Lahore and from Bihar (Ali & Ripley 1983). In recent years nothing has been reported on the species, although it is a popular cage bird.

I conducted a short survey between 5-7 June, 1994, on the species around Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. According to the information gathered from local bird trappers, the species has been largely wiped out from near Jhansi although a few populations do exist near Tikamgarh. An extensive two day search on the Chatarpur road resulted in locating a small population in a nearby village, (name of the village

is not given for obvious reasons). An isolated population of about 60 to 70 birds was seen in a stony, arid wasteland. They appear to move around in a limited area of about 1 sq. km.

The survey was done in the non-breeding season. The maximum flock size was seven. The first bird was sighted at 0545 hrs and I could observe them almost throughout the day. Bimodal activity pattern of feeding was noticed. Most of the long-duration sightings were in the afternoon when the birds used to gather and rest in *Ipomea* shrubs. The birds were seen reaching the resting site from 0900 hrs where they remained till 1500 hrs. The resting site was comparatively cool due to water and presence of vegetation. The day resting site was shaded by tall, dense *Ficus* trees.

It was seen that the Green Munia mostly keep to themselves while resting and foraging. It was also observed that they never roosted communally with the Red munia (*Estrilda amandava*) or other species in congregation in the sugarcane field. This is also confirmed by trappers who catch many species of

munias (Red or Spotted) in large numbers in sugarcane fields, but never get the Green Munia in these flocks.

Other birds seen in the vicinity of the Green munia sharing the same resources were the Red munia (*Estrilda amandava*), Spotted munia (*Lonchura punctulata*), Whitethroated munia (*L. malabarica*), Blackheaded munia (*L. malacca*), Baya (*Ploceus philippinus*), Black-throated baya (*P. benghalensis*) and Streaked weaver (*P. manyar*).

The Green munia is not a shy bird; it could be approached as close as 8-10 m and was found near human habitations. When approached they used to fly to nearby bushes, and while doing so the green colour on their back perfectly camouflaged them with the surroundings. Often it was seen that two birds, most likely a pair, would sit on a branch and when excited would flatten their tail, pointing towards each other while uttering a high pitched note.

According to a TRAFFIC-India report on live birds (Ahmed and Menon, 1995), it seems that trapping is a threat to its population which is true to

a very large extent. Previous visits to Lucknow, and information from Mt. Abu have also confirmed that most isolated populations near these places and in many areas of Madhya Pradesh have been wiped out by bird trappers as this bird can be easily caught with baiting and decoy birds, and trappers can catch most of the individuals of an area.

There is a need for a full fledged project on the Green Munia to study the various aspects of its biology and also the impact of trapping the species.

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#### 14. COMMENTS ON SOME NEW BIRD RECORDS FROM TAMILNADU

In a recent issue of the *Journal*, S. Balachandran has reported a few new records in certain bird species in Tamilnadu (*JBNHS*: 91(2): 314; 317-318; 322-323; 1994). These include breeding records of Coot and occurrences of the Indian Courser, Black Redstart and Small Minivet. I have a few comments to make on these notes.

The breeding of Coot (*Fulica atra*) in Coimbatore (Tamilnadu) in 1983 was earlier reported by P.S. Sivaprasad (*Blackbuck*, 2(2): 17-19, 1986). These birds continue to breed in the same area and even recently, in 1995, young birds were seen

(Sivaprasad, pers. comm.). Breeding of Coots has also been reported recently in Kerala by C. Sushanth Kumar (*Newsletter for Birdwatchers*, 33: 55, 1993).

Although the Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) is not a common bird, it is certainly not as rare as suggested by Balachandran. It occurs mostly in dry, stony, open areas, dried-up lake margins etc., and I have seen birds in suitable habitats around Madras in small numbers. These include open areas near Vendanthangal, Velacherry (outskirts of Madras city), near Thirupporur (off the old Mahabalipuram Road) and along the road from